COME ALONG WITH ME, INTO A WORLD OF FANTASY: AN ANALYSIS OF THE ILLUSIVE WORLD OF SHIRLEY JACKSON

A Thesis

Presented to

The School of Graduate Studies

Drake University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

---

by

Jerry M. Wadden

January 1970

COME ALONG WITH ME, INTO A WORLD OF FANTASY: AN ANALYSIS OF THE ILLUSIVE WORLD OF SHIRLEY JACKSON

by

Jerry M. Wadden

Approved by Committee:

Chairman

Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The specific purpose of this study of Shirley Jackson was to determine what roles her worlds of fantasy, isolation, and illusion play in man's search for meaning and identity. Jackson's five main novels, Hangsaman, The Bird's Nest, The Sundial, The Haunting of Hill House, and We Have Always Lived in the Castle, were critically examined in order of their composition to locate and identify her worlds of fantasy. Once these worlds were located, it was necessary to discover why her characters sought refuge in them. What did these worlds of fantasy have to offer that could not be found in the real world? In all five novels, Jackson's answer was that people are forced to search for love and happiness in fantasy when these goals are impossible in the real world.

Shirley Jackson first became a recognized writer in 1948 with the publication of her short story "The Lottery" in The New Yorker. Earlier in 1948, however, she had published her first novel, The Road Through the Wall, which received reviews in only seven periodicals. Hangsaman, however, published in 1951, enthusiastically received reviews in seventeen periodicals, showing how her stature had increased because of "The Lottery." With her first short

story appearing in The New Republic in 1941, Jackson published over seventy short stories in various periodicals, especially The New Yorker and women's magazines. During her life she published a total of twelve books: six novels, one volume of short stories, two fictionalized memoirs, and three juvenile books. She was working on her seventh novel, Come Along with Me, when she died in 1965.

To date, Shirley Jackson has received little critical acclaim except for "The Lottery"; no one has written a book on her; and again, except for "The Lottery," she is only briefly mentioned in a few books of contemporary American literary criticism. Half of her books are now out of print. This lack of recognition is incredible in light of the fact that The New Yorker received more mail concerning its publication of "The Lottery" than any other piece of fiction it had ever published.[1]

A few critics, however, recognized that Jackson had a haunting, eerie style all of her own. An anonymous writer in Newsweek wrote of her: "She was unique . . . an absolute original."[2] Granville Hicks said of her:

> Miss Jackson was certainly not the first writer to assert that there is evil in everybody, but what might be merely a platitude becomes a great truth because of

---

[1]Shirley Jackson, "Biography of a Story," Come Along with Me, Stanley Edgar Hyman, editor (New York, The Viking Press, 1968), p. 214.

[2]"School of One," Newsweek, LXVI (August 23, 1965), 83.

> the depth and consistency of her own feeling about life and because she was so extraordinarily successful in making her readers feel what she felt. She plunges the reader into a world of her creating and leaves him wondering about what he has always believed to be the real world.[1]

The reason her reader ponders whether or not Jackson's world is the real world is because she portrayed it so sensitively and truthfully that to recognize it as the real world, which it is, becomes a painful experience. With deadly accuracy, she aimed at the inhumanity of man to his fellow man. This study examined her view of the world.

---

[1]Granville Hicks, "The Nightmare in Reality," Saturday Review, XLIX (September 17, 1966), 32.

CHAPTER II

THE END OF THE LINE

Slack your rope, Hangsaman,
O slack it for a while,
I think I see my father coming,
Coming many a mile.

O father, have you brought me gold,
Or will you pay my fee?
Or have you come to see me hang
Upon the gallows tree?

--Old English Ballad[1]

Hangsaman is a strange novel about a maturing adolescent, seventeen-year-old Natalie Waite, who creates three worlds of fantasy--the interrogation by the police detective, the seduction by the stranger, and the escape with her alter ego Tony. These worlds splinter from the multiple personality that has developed because of the father-pleasing mask that she wears which causes her to sink into schizophrenia. These inner worlds of fantasy represent her true self while she masquerades on the surface; they enable her to escape the pressures, cruelties, and boredom of reality. In order to understand what Jackson is saying about the human condition, the following three questions will be examined: (1) Why does Natalie retreat into her worlds of fantasy? (2) When and how often does she retreat? and (3) What about her experiences in either reality or fantasy cause her ultimately to choose reality?

---

[1]"Psychological Thriller," Time, LVII (April 23, 1951), 114.

Natalie's first retreat into fantasy occurs while her parents are arguing about the guests for the Sunday literary cocktail party. In her imagination she has been visiting these strange lands for the past two years, but her parents haven't realized this because they are too concerned with the more important aspects of life, like discussing C. S. Lewis' The Function of the Orgasm with their literary friends.

The literary cocktail party is the main concern of Arnold Waite, the father, but to Natalie it is boring and meaningless; however, she pretends great interest because she knows that it pleases her father. When her brother--the universal Buddy, contrastingly representing an adolescent who does what he feels like doing--asks her to go swimming which she would prefer to do, she replies, "Dad wants me to stay."[1] Her father has decided that she will be a writer so she also feigns an interest in writing. This continued effort to please her father and fulfill his wishes in everything, which involves smothering her own personal desires, is the father-made rope around her neck which splits her personality because she is able to achieve this only by dressing up in a disguise that is not herself. This masquerade proves to be more than Natalie can handle and she slips into schizophrenia.

Natalie's father-pleasing personality rides the surface on Sunday while submerged deep within her the real Natalie

---

[1]Shirley Jackson, Hangsaman (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, Inc., 1951), p. 31.

escapes her egotistical father and her alcoholic, defeated, whining mother by creating an imaginary police detective who questions her about a romantic killing. This fantasy is of more interest and relevance than her father's literary friends. This is due, perhaps, to the Freudian suggestion of murder being associated with the sex act; the detective does question her about the knife and the blood, two sex symbols. Jackson shows that when an adolescent is psychologically forced to live in an undesirable, meaningless world, she will create an imaginary world in order to escape.

Charity, her mother, has too much to drink at the party, as usual, and sobs to Natalie the tragedy of her life and marriage. While she is forced to listen to her drunken, hysterical mother, she has a premonition of an important event:

> A sort of intoxication possessed Natalie; . . . the preliminary faint stirrings of something about to happen. The idea once born, she knew it was true; something incredible was going to happen, now, right now, this afternoon, today . . . .[1]

This is the first hint that her imagination is conjuring up something stronger than the detective. As the real world becomes more horrible and the disguise harder to wear, her imaginary world must concoct an even stronger escape potion, which materializes in her mind as the seduction by the stranger. This next level of fantasy that Natalie's imagination creates during the party is another aspect of her

---

[1] Ibid., p. 47.

multiple personality.

The first guests to arrive at the party are Verna Hansen and her brother Arthur, who wanders off into the garden without ever sitting down. Natalie and Verna sit in chairs on the lawn where Verna says to Natalie:

> Little Natalie, never rest until you have uncovered your essential self. Remember that. Somewhere, deep inside you, hidden by all sorts of fears and worries and petty little thoughts, is a clean pure being made of radiant colors.[1]

This is precisely what is wrong with Natalie--her real self is deep inside of her rather than on the surface in place of the mask.

When the party has reached its peak and everyone is shouting in order to be heard, the imaginary detective once again resumes his questioning of Natalie and she is able to see him more clearly in her mind than ". . . the people on the lawn . . . ."[2] She has simply switched off the external world because the internal one is preferable. But Natalie and the detective are interrupted by a stranger whom she had tripped over earlier in the afternoon while he sat in a big chair. She wonders what if ". . . his voice were in her mind like the detective's,"[3] and a moment later she realizes that their voices are equally clear. The stranger, like the detective, is part of her imaginary world.

Natalie's last thought on the afternoon of the party

---

[1] Ibid., p. 37.

[2] Ibid., p. 47.

[3] Ibid., p. 48.

is one of horrifying fright: "Oh my dear God sweet Christ, . . . is he going to touch me?"[1] Alone in the dark woods, she is completely unable to separate fantasy from reality. She believes that the stranger is real and is going to seduce her. This imaginary seduction,[2] which she believes to be real (and, perhaps, unconsciously hopes to be real just like the killing of her lover), is the materialization in her mind of the earlier premonition.

When she awakes the following morning, Natalie truly believes that she has been seduced--she feels sick, has a headache, and is dizzy. When she looks in the mirror, she imagines that she sees bruises on her face; but at breakfast, no one mentions that there is anything unusual about Natalie. If she had been bruised, certainly someone would have noticed. The seduction, the bruised face, and the sickness are all part of her imaginary world where she escapes the pressures and boredom of reality.

Natalie fears going to college, but the idea of staying home with her mother and father is even worse. But once she arrives at college, she realizes that this represents a world apart from the unhappy adult world, a chance to begin life all over again. As her real self begins to surface temporarily at college, the manifestations of her multiple personality--the questioning detective--begin to vanish.

---

[1] Ibid., p. 54.

[2] The setting for the imaginary seduction by the stranger and the later seduction by her alter ego Tony is the same.

Shortly after the term begins, however, a girl relates an episode about another girl named Maxine who went away over the weekend to have an abortion. This triggers Natalie's mind to recall the seduction which is still quite real in her mind. At one of the dorm's initiation rituals, the freshman girls are all ordered to tell a dirty joke. Natalie refuses. The other girls in the dorm take delight in gossiping about venereal disease, Peeping Toms, attempted suicides, abortions, and sex, but Natalie is revolted by these discussions and seeks escape.

Sex-related topics are the "thing" during bull sessions with most of the girls in the dorm, but these discussions nauseate Natalie because of her latent homosexual inclinations which have developed within her as one facet of her multiple personality. She lacks normal sexual development because she has suppressed her interest in sex while showing more interest in things that would be pleasing to her father. Jackson shows that a healthy interest in sex, which would be quite normal for an adolescent, cannot be suppressed without becoming warped and twisted.

Natalie begins a withdrawal from these "horrors" of campus life and after two months, she writes in her personal journal:

> I suppose you have been wondering . . . my darling Natalie, what I can find to be thinking about . . . Natalie seems so strange lately, she seems so withdrawn and distant and quiet . . . Natalie is frightened and perhaps she even thinks sometimes about a

> certain long ago bad thing that she promised me never to think about again.[1]

This personal guardian to whom she writes is additional evidence of her splitting personality. At college, her main means of escape has been to isolate herself in her dorm room.

Natalie's only remaining friends at college are Arthur Langdon, her English professor, and his wife Elizabeth. They remind her of her parents, and she tries to impress Arthur by wearing a disguise just like she does for her father. One evening she is invited to a cocktail party with the Langdons in Vicki and Anne's dorm room. Elizabeth gets "smashed," so Natalie helps her home while Arthur stays with Vicki and Anne. On the way back to her room, Natalie realizes that the Langdons--the drunken wife and the egotistical, pseudo-intellectual husband--are reflections of her own parents. The adult world of her parents from which she has tried to escape has followed her to college.

Before going to bed that night, she writes to her father:

> There is a very strange character around here who would interest you very much. She is always off by herself somewhere, and when I asked someone about her they laughed and said, "Oh, that's that girl Tony Something." I keep seeing her around and I think I would like to meet her.[2]

This is the first mention of the mysterious, alter ego, Tony.

---

[1]Jackson, op. cit., p. 135.

[2]Ibid., p. 177.

If another girl on campus were writing home about Natalie Somebody, she would describe Natalie as ". . . a very strange character . . . ."[1] This alter ego is further evidence of Natalie's multiple personality and her desire for escape from the adult world and campus life. Near the end of the same letter, Natalie writes again of Tony:

> Speaking of magic, I figure that now I have once mentioned that I would like to meet that girl Tony, I will certainly meet her soon. I have discovered that all you have to do is notice a thing like that concretely enough to say it, as in a letter like this, for it to happen. I suppose once I meet her I will be disappointed.[2]

Before her imaginary seduction, Natalie had a premonition ". . . of something about to happen."[3] This first concrete mentioning of something is the triggering device for her imagination.

During that night after Vicki and Anne's cocktail party, Natalie is awakened by an imaginary, unidentifiable figure in her unusually dark room. (The imaginary stranger who seduced her was unidentifiable because of the darkness, and he led her away after a cocktail party.) The alter ego Tony takes her hand and leads her away. Two facts substantiate that Tony is a creation of Natalie's imagination. First, when Natalie runs out of the dorm or thinks she runs out of the dorm, the burglar alarm fails to go off; and

---

[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 178.

[3] Ibid., p. 47.

second, Natalie runs across the campus or thinks she does with Tony, who is naked,[1] in pursuit. These two happenings are highly improbable; thus, these two events and the similarity of the pattern of events before Tony's arrival and before the seduction by the imaginary stranger cast Tony as a character in Natalie's world of fantasy.

Tony does not really exist except in Natalie's mind, but Natalie's imaginary world has come to have more meaning than the real world and she has trouble separating them. Natalie's world of fantasy is unshaken by conflicting facts. For example, although they never leave the dorm when the imaginary Tony first takes Natalie to her room, Natalie writes to her father on the following Saturday that Tony ". . . lives in a house on the other side of the campus . . . ."[2]

Tony next appears to Natalie at a cocktail party at the Langdons' home. Natalie, although playing the game of nodding her head at the right times during the conversation, is really quite bored with the whole affair and wishes she could escape from it. She slips out to the front porch where she finds Tony waiting for her; the cause of wanting to escape does have the effect of producing Tony.

About one week after the appearance of Tony, Natalie begins to question who she herself really is. She thinks that perhaps she is not Natalie Waite, perhaps this is all a

---

[1]Natalie's latent homosexual tendencies are again seen in this imaginary pursuit by her nude alter ego.

[2]Jackson, op. cit., p. 192.

dream; and when she wakes up, she'll be someone else. She questions what is real and what is illusory. And the worst thought of all is that what seems real is real--she is Natalie Waite, a college girl who must cope with the dreary, actual world. The idea that she is not dreaming, that life is not an illusion, is the most frightening idea of all. This terrifying thought of the reality of reality is what she must be led from by her imaginary Tony.

Natalie visits her parents for a few days at Thanksgiving but feels awkward during the entire visit and would like to escape from it. On her first night back in the dorm, she is rejected by Rosalind, a girl who is too busy reading to talk to her. Lonely, she strolls across the campus, imagining that it has been scaled down to miniature size and that she is the master over all of it. She feels a great destructive urge and imagines herself killing the little people and destroying all of the buildings.[1]

Later, she meets Arthur Langdon who weakly announces that he and Elizabeth are going to have a baby. With this birth announcement from the Langdons, who mirror the Waites, Jackson focuses precisely on one of the "terrors" of reality,

---

[1]This imagined situation of miniature people and Natalie's destructive desire to kill them is almost identical to the situation in Chapter II of Mark Twain's "The Mysterious Stranger" where Philip Traum creates a crowd of little people and then crushes them with a board. Another related idea from Twain is at the end of "The Mysterious Stranger" when Philip Traum proclaims that nothing exists, everything is a dream, an illusion.

one of the cruelties that has caused Natalie's dissociation. The Langdons don't really love each other: she is ignored, depressed, and an alcoholic; Arthur is vain, phony, and foolish. They will have a child, but they will be too busy with cocktail parties to love and guide a baby through adolescence to adulthood. That child, like Natalie who unfortunately sees the tragic parallel, may well grow up with a frail grasp on reality and slip into schizophrenia. Jackson uses Natalie to illustrate what these real "horrors" can do to the human spirit.

After meeting Arthur, Natalie knows that she is headed toward Tony's imaginary house. When she thinks she's inside Tony's room, Natalie apologizes to her for going home over vacation, explaining that the trip home was an unpleasant experience as Natalie had known it would be. When she tells Tony how awful it was, Tony replies, "Of course."[1]

When Natalie enters the imaginary scene, Tony is playing solitaire with the Tarot cards, and Natalie remembers that the card she loves the most is the Magician. The Magician card is appropriate because both are able to create illusions. Tony's favorite card is the Page of Swords, and her favorite suit is swords. Tony's preference, which is really Natalie's, for the sword, a male sex symbol, shows again the latent homosexual splinter of Natalie's personality through her alter ego.

---

[1]Jackson, op. cit., p. 227.

In The Adolescent in the American Novel, 1920-1960, W. Tasker Witham states that Natalie ". . . . forms a strange relationship with a perhaps nonexistent fellow student named Tony,"[1] and ". . . . . it is never entirely clear whether Tony exists or is a product of Natalie's fertile and vivid imagination."[2] Contrary to Witham, Tony is clearly a product of Natalie's imagination, a character in Natalie's world of fantasy. Tony, like the detective and the stranger, materializes in Natalie's mind when she wants to escape the real world. The detective, the stranger, and Tony are part of a cause-effect relationship. The cause is the unpleasant reality and Natalie's desire to escape that reality. The effect is an illusion in the form of the detective, the stranger, or Tony. But when she is frequently unable to separate fantasy from reality, the illusion becomes Natalie's reality.

Natalie's last episode--the journey to the amusement park--begins with the imaginary Tony being more real than anything in Natalie's world. This trip is Tony's idea: "Will you come somewhere with me? It's a long way."[3] The distance to which she refers is more mental than physical. Tony's invitation could be stated like this: Come along with me, into the world of fantasy, where you will live and dwell,

---

[1]W. Tasker Witham, The Adolescent in the American Novel, 1920-1960 (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1964), p. 128.

[2]Ibid., p. 72.

[3]Jackson, op. cit., p. 255.

permanently.

Natalie, setting out for a place where people can never bother her again, gets on a bus and discovers that her alter ego has been swept away by the crowd. Her need of isolation is seen again as she feels as though she cannot breathe because of the people on the bus. Feeling caged and self-conscious, she wants to escape. She believes that her being crushed on this bus is part of a master plan against her ever achieving her isolation. Her world of fantasy has now progressed far beyond a harmless escape mechanism.

After Tony rejoins her on the bus, Natalie remarks that if she were inventing the world she might do away with all ". . . . the people who saw it clearly. . . ."[1] Later that day, Natalie remarks, "Maybe I'd better give up inventing worlds and do without any for a while."[2] This ambiguous remark could refer to her previous mention of inventing the world and destroying realistic people; it could refer to the world of fantasy that she has invented; or it could refer to her contemplation of suicide. If either of the latter two is the case, then Natalie is beginning to see that through her alter ego Tony she has become a threat to herself.

The bus arrives at Paradise Park with its lake, bath house, skating rink, merry-go-round, and roller coaster. The

---

[1] Ibid., p. 261. [2] Ibid.

park, which was knowingly called the "End of the line"[1] by a man on the bus, is desolate, and a shiver ripples through Natalie. As the bus pulls away, Tony supposedly remarks, "It was probably the last bus."[2] This bus, like those in "The Bus" and The Bird's Nest, becomes Jackson's symbol of a tormented journey, but it is also the connecting link to the normal world, and Natalie sees it as her last chance to return to reality. In fact, as the driver pulls away, he shouts, "Last chance?"[3]

The pattern of the imaginary seduction is again repeated as Natalie is led down a dark, narrow path to a small clearing in the woods. In the seduction scene, the stranger and Natalie sit ". . . on a fallen trunk."[4] And now, at Paradise Park, Natalie sees ". . . a fallen tree across the small clearing and, as she knew she was expected to, sat down upon it."[5] On the day of the seduction by the stranger, Natalie wore a blue dress; her alter ego now has on a blue raincoat. At the seduction scene, Natalie says, "I used to play in here when I was a child."[6] Her alter ego now says, "Of course I've been here before."[7] The scenes for the seduction by the stranger and the seduction by her alter ego Tony are identical because they both occur in the same place--Natalie's imagination.

---

[1] Ibid., p. 259. [2] Ibid., p. 263. [3] Ibid., p. 265.
[4] Ibid., p. 54. [5] Ibid., p. 272. [6] Ibid., p. 53.
[7] Ibid., p. 274.

This attempted seduction by her alter ego Tony, which is far more horrifying than her parents, the Langdons, or the dorm girls, jolts Natalie to realize that reality is preferable to this twisted world of fantasy. As she leaves the ironically named Paradise Park, she knows that Tony is defeated and gone forever because this fantasy no longer offers intrigue and escape. Because she rejects this world of masquerade, Natalie escapes the hangman; but it is only a postponement of her inevitable hanging, for nothing in the now preferred world of reality has changed.

She is given a ride back to town in an old car and is let out in the middle of the bridge over the river. Because she has rejected fantasy, she realizes that the only remaining choices are suicide or the reality of her parents, the Langdons, and the dorm girls. She chooses suicide:

> Why shouldn't I--? she thought with irresistible logic and leaned over farther, and even farther; she put one shoe against the stone to urge herself higher and thought with glory, Mother won't care if I scuff it now; it will be lost before it wears out.[1]

She is stopped from jumping by an anonymous figure who yells at her. But as she walks away from the river, she knows that only if she jumped would she be of real interest to anyone. This horrendous picture of an adolescent maturing in an apathetic world is deadly accurate. The rope has been lifted temporarily from Natalie's neck, but Jackson leaves her "waiting" by the gallows tree.

---

[1] Ibid., p. 279.

CHAPTER III

THE QUEST FOR IDENTITY

The Bird's Nest is a puzzling psychological novel about the emotional deterioration and eventual splitting of a personality. Like Natalie Waite in Hangsaman, Elizabeth's personality splinters because she denies existence to part of it. Elizabeth's mental breakdown manifests itself as four separate personalities of her own sick personality--Elizabeth, Beth, Betsy, and Bess. This disintegration of her personality and how the four separate personalities are fused into Victoria Morgen must be explored to understand what Jackson says about the role of love in life.

Elizabeth Richmond, a passive, purposeless twenty-three-year-old clerk-typist in a small-town New England museum, goes to her mundane job every morning and returns to her brandy-drinking maiden aunt, Morgen Jones, every night. She has no friends; her main purpose in life is to exist with as little trouble as possible. She took the job in the museum because her aunt recommended it, and "she went to work, then, with no further direction than this crossing of two lines to determine a point. . . ."[1] With this line, Jackson points

---

[1]Shirley Jackson, The Bird's Nest, The Magic of Shirley Jackson, Stanley Edgar Hyman, editor (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966), pp. 152-153.

out early that Elizabeth has one center but is split four ways.

Elizabeth's mind and the museum building begin ". . . to slip at about the same time."[1] In order to level the building, a shaft, the entire height of the building, is driven in the wall next to her desk. While this work is in progress, she finds herself increasingly plagued by headaches and backaches and suddenly begins to receive vicious, anonymous notes in a childish, but vaguely familiar hand:

> . . . and i can do whatever i want and you cant do anything about it and i hate you dirty lizzie and youll be sorry you ever heard of me because now we both know youre a dirty dirty dirty . . .[2]

She begins to sneak out of her aunt's home during the middle of the night, and while visiting some of her aunt's friends, unknowingly shouts an obscenity at them.[3] All of these disquieting events mark the beginning of her mental illness and lead Elizabeth and her aunt to seek the help of a psychiatrist, Dr. Victor Wright. Jackson gives all of her characters in The Bird's Nest symbolic names; for example, before going to a psychiatrist, Elizabeth is taken to Dr. Harold Ryan, who does nothing for her and whose name has no significance; while Dr. Victor Wright, whose name contrastingly has deep significance, does everything for her. He cures her or makes

---

[1] Ibid., p. 150.

[2] Ibid., p. 164.

[3] These friends, the Arrows, show extreme concern over Elizabeth's health, which is ironical because "arrows" kill Birds. While she is there, she rubs her neck against the back of a chair like a cat, also a killer of birds.

her "right"; he likes to "write" about her case; and like a shipwright or wheelwright, he creates.

Dr. Wright, like the workmen who drive a hole through all four levels of the museum to level it, begins his descent into Elizabeth's four levels. The shaft in the museum enables the workmen, who want to repair and reconstruct, to see from the third floor to the cellar and to expose its base; but at each descending level, it becomes harder to find; for example, on the first floor, the shaft is ". . . behind a little door marked 'Do not enter.'"[1] In order to right Elizabeth, Dr. Wright's ultimate goal is to drive an opening shaft through all four of her personalities so each one can recognize the existence of the others, which he thinks will fuse all four back into one; thus solving the riddle of "The Bird's Nest":

> Elizabeth, Lizzy, Betsy and Bess
> All went together to seek a bird's nest;
> They found a nest with five eggs in it;
> They each took one and left four in it.[2]

The explanation for this seventeenth-century riddle, from which Jackson takes her novel's title, is that the four girls looking for the bird's nest are really just one girl, so even though all take an egg, only one egg is taken, which leaves four in the nest.

The entrance into the multiple personalities of Elizabeth, like the shaft in the museum which begins on the

---

[1]Jackson, op. cit., p. 151.

[2]"Strange Case of Miss R," Time, LXIII (June 21, 1954), 108.

third floor next to her desk, begins with "Elizabeth" because she is at the highest level of consciousness. The shaft drilled in the building represents the first surfacing of the submerged personalities in her; for on the first day that the shaft is by her desk, she receives her first anonymous letter, which Dr. Wright later discovers to be from Betsy, two levels down.

Dr. Wright finds Elizabeth to be a tense bundle of inhibitions caused by social norms; she has deliberately locked herself in a state of silence, stupidity, and fear. She is paralyzed by the past, to which she is chained by her menial, non-imaginative job in the museum. Dr. Wright sees her mind as being plugged like a water pipe and feels that he must try to unplug it by entering the line and clearing away the stoppage.

> My problem was specifically, to get back through the pipe to where the obstruction was, and clear it away. Although the figure of speech is highly distasteful to one as timid of tight places as myself, the only way in which I might accomplish this removal was by going myself (through hypnosis, you will perceive) down the pipe until, the stoppage found, I could attack it with every tool of common sense and clear-sighted recognition.[1]

This analogy along with Dr. Wright's deliverance of all four personalities of Elizabeth into the world shows that Jackson has created a character with a personality so disintegrated that she can only be cured through rebirth, the creation of

---

[1]Jackson, op. cit., p. 186.

one whole personality out of the warring four. The four personality splinters cannot exist alone by themselves; they must be integrated for the personality to be whole.

Jackson splits Elizabeth four ways and identifies each of the personalities with a form or derivative of Elizabeth--Elizabeth, Beth, Betsy, and Bess. The name symbolism, however, does not stop there: Elizabeth Richmond could be named after Elizabeth I, who was rumored to be a "virgin" queen, which subsequently led explorers to name the first colony Virginia, where the city of Richmond, the capital of the state, is now located. "Richmond" implies wealth and money; Elizabeth was left a fortune by her father. Richmond is also a suburb of Victoria, Australia. Victoria, the feminine form of Dr. Wright's first name Victor and a form of "victory" which she has achieved at the end of the book, is the name chosen by the doctor and Aunt Morgen to replace Elizabeth. As Elizabeth and Victoria are thought of in reference to the English queens, Victoria represents a woman who is much better adjusted, both socially and sexually; therefore, the changing of Elizabeth's name to Victoria symbolizes the change that has taken place with the fusion of the four personalities. The changing of her name to Victoria is also a severing with her past and her mother, also named Elizabeth Richmond.

Although the seeds of her mental illness were planted early in childhood, the disintegration of Elizabeth Richmond's personality began, symbolically, four years ago with the death

of her mother, who was called "Lizzy" and symbolically existed in mud like a lizard. In attempting to explain to herself the tangled recollection she has of an adolescent traumatic experience, her confused memories of her mother and Robin, her mother's lover, and the guilt she feels at her mother's death, Elizabeth unconsciously denies existence to her whole personality, which is submerged, while only the tense, tormented part surfaces. Long before her mother died, with no one with whom to communicate except her aunt, Elizabeth had begun to live in the past. Upon discovering the Betsy personality, Dr. Wright realizes that Elizabeth must be able to ". . . slough off the paralyzing past. . . "[1] like a lizard would shed its skin and begin life anew. She saves the anonymous letters in a ". . . red cardboard valentine box which had held chocolates on her twelfth birthday,"[2] the year that girls traditionally begin the change into womanhood; however, Elizabeth must make this transition alone because there is no one with whom she can discuss those sexual matters about which all adolescent girls are curious. Jackson has completely isolated Elizabeth from any feminine guidance by having her live with her masculine aunt, Morgen Jones, who would like to have been her sister's lover and Elizabeth's father. Curiously, Elizabeth does eventually take her surname "Morgen" from her aunt; and after Elizabeth is cured, Morgen says to Dr. Wright, "You can be her mommy,

---

[1] Ibid., p. 198.

[2] Ibid., p. 154.

and I'll be her daddy. . . ."[1]

Elizabeth's smothered personalities begin to grow and seek control of her, an inner turbulence externalized in the headaches and backaches. Under the hypnosis and patient care of Dr. Wright, the different personalities emerge: Beth, who is sweet and outgoing; Betsy, who is wild, independent, impish, and fun-loving; and Bess, who is a vulgar, money-loving witch.

Once all four personalities are on the surface, a terrifying struggle begins for control of Elizabeth's body. Betsy, for example, feeling that she has always been a prisoner, takes the first opportunity, seizes control, and flees in search of her mother to New York on a bus, which is Jackson's mechanistic symbol of a tormented journey. The journey to New York symbolizes the entire struggle of Elizabeth to discover herself.

Jackson reveals that Betsy is that part of the personality which has a strong sister and mother wish. Betsy is the externalization of Elizabeth's personality when she was sixteen. The Betsy personality wants a sister so she will have someone with whom to talk or play. She needs a mother for guidance and direction, but she only remembers that her mother was with Robin all the time. Consequently, in New York, Betsy engages in a crazy search, which is completely

---

[1] Ibid., p. 374.

accepted because New York is a crazy world. Jackson pointedly shows that people with twisted values and fantasies survive exceedingly well in New York.

After a day of searching, Betsy finds Mr. Harris, whom she mistakes for Robin. Finding Robin once again instead of her mother whom she so desperately needs and being lost in a strange world cause Betsy to begin to lose the controlling power of the body to Bess. A physical fight, representing the great internal struggle, takes place and leaves Elizabeth bruised, scratched, and unconscious.

Mr. Harris is found in Room 372 of a hotel in the twelve hundred block. This is an excellent example of the numerological symbolism that is found in The Bird's Nest. Jackson increases the significance of important numbers by repeatedly using them in various ways. The number twelve is important because of the candy box that Elizabeth saved from her twelfth birthday. The hotel is in the twelve hundred block. By adding three plus seven plus two from Room 372, the total twelve is reached. By dividing 372 by four, the number of personalities, the answer of 93 is found; nine plus three equals twelve. As the Elizabeth personality is packing to leave New York, she thinks of ". . . the slip of paper enclosed in a theatre program pointing out that there was an inadvertant mistake on page twelve. . . ."[1] Because of

---

[1] Ibid., p. 260.

negligence at age twelve, and for the past twelve years (she is now twenty-four), her personality has disintegrated. It is interesting to note that there are twelve letters in the title The Bird's Nest.

After Elizabeth has been under the doctor's care for twenty months, the personality of Bess finally surfaces. Bess represents that aspect of Elizabeth immediately following her mother's death which is greedily interested in preserving the family fortune. Jackson creates this splinter of the personality as a vulgar, arrogant symbol of a materialistic society.

During her search in New York, Betsy walks into a small apartment house foyer where she sees a mural of orange fish:

> However live the fish may have been when the mural was painted, they were long dead now, floating miserably upon the painted surface of their water, fins dragging; perhaps at one point they might have been saved, when, gasping for breath, they first came to the surface and turned their agonized suffocating eyes upon the casual guest entering the foyer of the apartment house; a little fresh water, a kindly look, might have revived the painted fish and made the visitor welcome in the dim light.[1]

Coming to the surface, the fish mirror the plight of Elizabeth; she is gasping for her breath now. She must receive some attention and kindness or she will drown.

The basic cause of Elizabeth's multiple personality is that her world, like nearly all of Jackson's worlds, is

---

[1] Ibid., p. 245.

totally unpleasant. Her father died when she was two, leaving her with her foul-living mother who promptly moved from New York to her sister Morgen's home where Elizabeth has now lived for twenty-two years.

Aunt Morgen's ugly, hideous house is the kind where hairy creatures are likely to be buried in the basement with stakes driven through their hearts and crucifixes emblazoned on their foreheads. The house seems to reach out and seize its inhabitants; it motivates guests to think of only one thing--escape. This is the perverse environment that Jackson creates for Elizabeth, who grows up lacking security, understanding, and love.

The part of Elizabeth's personality which grieved for her mother split off into Bess; the part that believed there was no mother became Betsy; the part that was sweet and trusting was smothered into Beth; and the remainder relaxes into passive, purposeless, frightened Elizabeth. Jackson shows that in a world where the moral and social order is polluted, the human personality cannot survive. Money, like the Richmond fortune, cannot replace inspiration, guidance, and love which are vital when dealing with the human spirit.

Dr. Wright's task, then, is to reveal the causes of the split and the existence of the other fragments to each of the personalities. Through hypnosis and two years of patient understanding, he finally succeeds in revealing that only by recognizing all of her personality and her potential

for both good and evil can Elizabeth be cured. Aunt Morgen also begins to be more patient and understanding, even through the mud-in-the-refrigerator and the mud sandwich episodes. Together, with love and understanding, they enable a new person to be born--Victoria Morgen, who is named after her two creators; thus cutting the last tie with her mother.

This new creation immediately begins to sever her ties with the past by cutting her hair, which was extremely long and symbolic of her entire life until now. She returns to the museum to discover the building balanced and the "whole" in the wall, which symbolized the task, to be gone. But Dr. Wright and Morgen Jones both realize that the real task has just begun:

> We have a sobering duty. She will owe to us her opinions, her discriminations, her reflections; we are able, as few others have ever been, to recreate, entire, a human being, in the most proper and reasonable mold, to select what is finest and most elevating from our own experience and bestow![1]

Jackson says that creation doesn't end with the birth of the child; it begins then. The creators are responsible for the attitudes, aspirations, and actions of their creation. Their greatest task is to mold with love what they have created; if they fail to do this, then existence will become a bird's nest of fear and chaos.

---

[1] Ibid., p. 374.

CHAPTER IV

TIME TO LOVE

The Sundial is a strange novel of twelve people awaiting the end of the world in the Halloran mansion. The first Mr. Halloran, who built the Halloran world because he did not know what else to do with his money, had the entire house and lawn styled with perfect symmetry, except for one lone object--the sundial, which was set badly off center. And rather than a traditional motto about time, inscribed on the sundial was the query WHAT IS THIS WORLD? As in Hangsaman and The Bird's Nest, Jackson's answer again deals with love and can best be seen by examining how the absence of love causes Aunt Fanny's revelations and their subsequent effects upon the Halloran world.

The story begins with the Halloran family returning from Lionel's funeral. His mother, Orianna Halloran, suspected of killing her only son to ensure her hold on the family power and fortune, is disturbed by her son's funeral because it upsets her schedule for the day; and she later remarks, "The departure of Lionel has been both refreshing and agreeable. We could well do without Lionel."[1] Her name "Orianna" suggests gold; she personifies greed and lust and has no love for anyone. Lionel's widow Maryjane suspects

---

[1]Shirley Jackson, The Sundial (New York: Ace Books, Inc., 1958), pp. 16-17.

her mother-in-law and has already planted these seeds of suspicion in her daughter Fancy, whose complete heartlessness is seen in Jackson's comment that she would have enjoyed her father's funeral if it had not been for her grandmother's presence. Jackson depicts Lionel's mother, widow, and daughter as three cruel, selfish, lustful, competing witches, thus making his death more of an escape from this zoo than a tragedy. By the use of Lionel's funeral, Jackson easily shows that these three females all lack love.

Jackson's other exhibits in the Halloran zoo are Richard, Orianna's mentally and physically retarded, wheelchair-confined husband whom she told on their honeymoon that she had married him for his house and money; Aunt Fanny, Richard's persecuted, martyred, love-starved sister; Ogilvie, Fancy's simpering nurse; and Essex, the sycophantic librarian whom all the women are trying to lure into bed. The second syllable of his name suggests the way all the females view him. Jackson captures five other specimens who join the menagerie later; thus, twelve people will eventually await doomsday in the Halloran mansion. As in The Bird's Nest, the number twelve takes on additional meaning. The twelve numbers on the sundial represent the twelve people awaiting the new world; and like the sundial, they are all unbalanced. Because they are waiting for August 30, the day of doom, they all begin to worship time but in a perverted manner, which the unbalanced sundial symbolizes. Aunt Fanny sees

the passing of time as a panacea for the absence of love.

On the afternoon of the funeral, Orianna, deciding that "the essence of life is change,"[1] decides to fire Ogilvie and Essex and confine Aunt Fanny to the tower. This decision which threatens Aunt Fanny's view of the future ignites her. During the night, she taps on Essex's door, whispering,

> Essex--I'm only forty-eight years old. Essex?. . . Orianna is older than I am. Essex?. . . Essex? Essex?. . . Let me in, Essex--you can stay on in the house with me.[2]

Essex lies silently and motionless in bed, afraid to move, pretending he is dead. To have old Aunt Fanny tumble into bed with him would be a deadly fate.

After failing at her bribe attempt, Aunt Fanny goes for an early morning walk in the garden where she meets Fancy who keeps running off from her like her fleeting love. In a sense, Aunt Fanny, while searching for love, is pursuing her imagination. Fancy continues to run ahead ". . . as in a dream . . ."[3] through the fog and mist, and Fanny realizes that ". . . it would not do to let her Fancy stray too far."[4] This absurd chase through the maze of hedges is like an Alice-in-Wonderland dream. When Fanny was a child, she ". . . had read Alice in Wonderland with an odd sense of distortion."[5]

---

[1] Ibid., p. 16.

[2] Ibid., p. 21.

[3] Ibid., p. 23.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., p. 142.

As Fanny pursues her "Fancy" farther into the gardens, she keeps remembering what Essex said:

> The path gets straighter and narrower all the time. The years press in. The path becomes a knife edge and I creep along, holding on even to that, the years closing in on either side and overhead.[1]

In the garden, noticing that the untrimmed hedges have grown out and up over the path making it dark and narrow, Aunt Fanny listens to a fountain and realizes that even its water will be trapped in a final narrowing. As she frequently does, Jackson reflects an individual's plight in some aspect of nature. As the path in the garden is overgrown and closing in on her, so is time closing in, and Aunt Fanny sees Essex as her last hope for love before the final narrowing.

Fanny bursts into a secret garden that no one has ever seen before, continues to hear a romantic fountain, thinks of Essex making love to her, grows frightened again, runs to the sundial and stops. Then she hears a voice:

> Frances, there is danger. Go back to the house. Tell them, in the house, tell them, in the house, tell them that there is danger. Tell them in the house that in the house it is safe. The father will watch the house, but there is danger. Tell them. . . . From the sky and from the ground and from the sea there is danger; tell them in the house. There will be black fire and red water and the earth turning and screaming; this will come.[2]

This is the first of three revelations that Fanny supposedly receives from her dead father--the first Mr. Halloran--who tells her that the world is coming to an end and only those

---

[1] Ibid., p. 9

[2] Ibid., p. 28.

in the Halloran house will be spared. Is this revelation true? Is Mr. Halloran a ghost? Does Fanny really see her dead father? Or does Fanny create the revelations from her imagination? Contrary to some belief, Jackson was not writing about the supernatural; she did at times focus on "weird" aspects of the natural world, but she always wrote about real people, not ghosts.

The ghost of her father was in Fanny's imagination. Just before she ran to the sundial, she was reassured by remembering ". . . the path gets narrower all the time. . . ."[1] She runs on to the sundial where she hears a voice. She questions herself as to whether or not the voice is real and thinks: "It is worse if it is not there; somehow it must be real because if it is not real it is in my own head; . . . it is real."[2] Again, the path narrows for Fanny. If this voice is not real, then her "fancy" has created it which would be worse than seeing ghosts. Hence, the choices become narrower and she must accept the voice as real. The fact is, however, that Fanny's imagination creates the voice and the revelation so she can gain a new hold on love through Essex.

Because Jackson does ascribe special significance to proper names in her work, it seems likely that "Halloran" has additional meaning. "Halloran" structurally resembles "Halloween." In Irish legend, the jack-o'-lantern originated

---

[1] Ibid., p. 25.

[2] Ibid., p. 27.

on Halloween; the Hallorans have a party the night before Doomsday and string lanterns all over the gardens. In Celtic and Anglo-Saxon legend, Halloween was the end of a year; Doomsday will supposedly mark the beginning of a new age. In Celtic Ireland, Halloween began with a human sacrifice; Orianna Halloran is found dead on Doomsday and her body is placed, like a sacrifice, at the foot of the sundial. Halloween originally began during the autumn festivals of pagan people; before Doomsday, a photograph of Orianna is found with a pin pushed through the throat, and Fancy's grandmother doll is found stuck full of pins on the sundial: these are both pagan practices. In early England, Halloween was a fire festival; Fanny's revelations say that the world will be consumed by fire. Halloween precedes All Saints' Day which is when all the blessed in heaven are honored; only those blessed to be living in the Halloran world will be alive after Doomsday. On Halloween, children do tricks for treats; Aunt Fanny Halloran has pulled off the biggest prank of all.

Fanny realizes that her revelations will keep Orianna from banishing Essex. Because she had just been rejected by Essex, her romantic visions of his making love to her would never materialize if she is unable to keep him there. She will also be the center of attention which will prevent Orianna from confining her to the tower. Fanny needs love so much that she creates the story so that everyone will love her for

saving them from going out into the world.

When Fanny first rushes into the house to announce the revelation, everyone laughs at her. But the laughter ceases when a snake, which is interpreted as a warning, crawls out of the fireplace. Immediately the revelation is believed and they begin to prepare for the day of doom. The Chosen Few trust in abstract beliefs only through their manifestations, which they then worship. None of them really believe Fanny's story, but they are afraid of the snake which is a concrete object. Soon after the revelation, they begin to love and worship Fanny in a somewhat primitive manner. For Fancy's doll house, Essex carves a totem pole, with a definite likeness of Aunt Fanny at the bottom. They do not understand the sun and universe and *time*, but the sundial makes these abstract concepts believable. In the new world which Aunt Fanny creates, she will be an important "lover" and will get Essex; this makes love believable.

Fanny takes Fancy to the upstairs apartment where she tells her how she (Fanny) was born and raised there and how much her parents loved her, but she also remembers that she was never allowed to touch things in the living room. Fanny cannot understand love because she has never seen it. She has always been isolated in the Halloran world. Her father was always dreaming of the lovely house he would someday build for his family, and her mother was always telling her how much they loved her and to keep her hands off the things

in the living room. Things, not people, have always been loved in the Halloran world. Thus, Aunt Fanny, like Natalie Waite in Hangsaman and Elizabeth Richmond in The Bird's Nest, grew up without compassion and love. Jackson's point is that time may pass bringing new worlds; but if a person has grown up without love and guidance, true happiness will always be an illusion. This is precisely what drives Natalie, Elizabeth, and now Aunt Fanny into worlds of fantasy.

The effect of Fanny's revelations is one of the keys to answering Jackson's question WHAT IS THIS WORLD? Fanny begins to bounce around happy and gay, like a girl in love for the first time. Believing that these people in the Halloran mansion will be the only humans left alive to breed a new race, she excitedly pictures herself as one of the cows in this new breeding pasture with the only bull, Essex. Because of the critical absence of love in Aunt Fanny's life, she pitifully forsees that the coming disaster in which she will breed children with Essex will bring her true love.

As the other females begin to realize that Essex will be the only male in the new world, the power struggle for his affection begins. As they compete for his affection, the women become even more oblivious to the deeper meaning of Fanny's revelations--mankind is about to be destroyed. Fanny creates her imaginary revelations to satisfy a hunger for love, and now all of the women are competing to satisfy this same hunger. Agusta Willow, an old friend of Orianna's who

comes to visit, enters and asks who Essex is ". . . as one going directly to the heart of a problem."[1] Love, or the absence of it, is the problem.

As these twelve people prepare for Doomsday, they all think far more of satisfying their own egos than of the ramifications of the impending tragedy. Crucial preparations are made as the night of the expected catastrophe approaches. In order to make room for the essential physical and material supplies which the Chosen Few feel most necessary for the new world, the books are removed from the library shelves and burned in the barbecue pit. Since the book ashes will not even make good fertilizer, they are taken to the village dump which is next to the cemetery. The only books to be taken into the new world are the Boy Scout Handbook, a French grammar book, an encyclopedia, and a World Almanac, which are books of facts and practical information. The burning of all books containing ideas about love and human values intensifies Jackson's theme about the absence of love. Essex, the librarian, who first mentions the path becoming narrower, ironically burns the books which represent the widening of the mind. In place of Dante, they take sunburn lotion; in place of Shakespeare, instant coffee; and in place of Twain, salted nuts.

Fancy, the youngest, is the only one ever to apply logic to the impending disaster. About being safe and isolated

---

[1] Ibid., p. 43.

in the new world, she says:

> Who wants to be safe, for heaven's sake? I'd rather live in a world full of other people, even dangerous people. I've been safe all my life. I've never even played with anyone, except my dolls.[1]

She thinks that Gloria, Orianna's seventeen-year-old cousin who is staying at the Halloran mansion while her father hunts lions in Africa, makes up the visions she sees in the mirror; and her Aunt Fanny's revelations nauseate her. Fancy says to Gloria:

> Look, don't any of you just plain <u>like</u> things? Always worrying about the world? Look. Aunt Fanny keeps saying that there is going to be a lovely world, all green and still and perfect and we are all going to live there and be peaceful and happy. That would be perfectly fine for me, except right here I live in a lovely world, all green and still and perfect, even though no one around here seems to be very peaceful or happy, but when I think about it this new world is going to have Aunt Fanny and my grandmother and you and Essex and the rest of these crazy people and my mother and what makes anyone think you're going to be more happy or peaceful just because you're the only ones left?[2]

Fancy's ideas can be summarized with the query painted over the windows at the landing of the majestic Halloran stairway--WHEN SHALL WE LIVE IF NOT NOW? Jackson's message is that the new world will not be any better with the same crazy, unloving people inhabiting it. The world does not need to be changed; the people do. The people in the Halloran mansion concern themselves completely with preparing for the next world rather than trying to improve this world by loving

---

[1] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 145.

[2] <u>Ibid</u>., p.131.

other people.

Jackson's point could be interpreted as an attack on those religions that stress the memorization of creeds and the preparation for the next life above becoming a better person in this life. The brief episode with the True Believers, who are going to be saved by a spaceship from Saturn because they do not indulge in meat, liquor, or metal fastenings, supports this.

Fancy continues to spell out Jackson's views on life:

> Well, you all want the whole world to be changed so you will be different. But I don't suppose people get changed any by just a new world. And anyway that world isn't any more real than this one. . . . Like I keep trying to tell you, it doesn't matter which world you're in.[1]

Jackson says that people will not be changed just because the old world passes and the new world begins. People cannot escape their problems by changing their environments; the problems are within, not without. Aunt Fanny believes that she will be happy in the new world because it will have love, but love grows in people, not on worlds. The absurdity of escaping problems by changing environments is magnified in The Sundial by the fact that the change to the new will be a real change only in their minds and in time. Aunt Fanny's new world will still be devoid of love.

The sundial and its query WHAT IS THIS WORLD? will be the same in any world. To the Hallorans, Jackson's answer--

---

[1] Ibid., p. 132.

This is a world devoid of love--to the sundial's question will be unchanged by time. If the new world did materialize, the Hallorans would look back on the old and realize that it was just as good or better than the new. They would wonder why they were still unhappy without ever realizing that the fault, the absence of love, lies within them. Because of their self-flattering blindness, they will never see themselves for what they really are--unloving egotists.

Jackson's view of life in The Sundial is her most pessimistic. She savagely shows what happens to people in a world void of love, where the worship of things and physical comfort is god. Seventeen-year-old Gloria says it best:

> All those people out there know about things like love and tenderness is what they hear in songs or read in books--that's one reason I'm glad we burned all the books here. People shouldn't be able to read them and remember nothing but lies. . . . No one is anything but tired and ugly and mean.[1]

For people like this, it is truly time to love.

---

[1] Ibid., p. 147.

CHAPTER V

THE SANCTUARY

Eleanor Vance, a thirty-two-year-old spinster, accepts Dr. John Montague's invitation to assist him in conducting his investigation of the supernatural manifestations of Hill House, an eighty-year-old remote, malevolent Victorian mansion whose history has seen a variety of human disorders. With this invitation and acceptance, Jackson begins her most haunting trek through a natural world containing supernatural elements and terrifyingly shows a person plunging into fantasy because the real world lacks love and understanding. In The Haunting of Hill House, Jackson's theme is, as in Hangsaman, The Bird's Nest, and The Sundial, that when people live in a meaningless, loveless vacuum, any world, even the supernatural or fantasy, offers refuge. Eleanor's dreary world forces her to accept Dr. Montague's invitation to stay at Hill House, where she finds her sanctuary, refuses to leave, and ultimately dies.

In The Haunting of Hill House, Eleanor's background and motivations illuminate the theme, as Jackson says herself:

> I have recently finished a novel about a haunted house. I was working on a novel about a haunted house because I happened by chance, to read a book about a group of people, nineteenth-century psychic researchers, who rented a haunted house and recorded their impressions of the things they saw and heard and felt in order to contribute a learned paper to the Society for

> Psychic Research. They thought that they were being terribly scientific and proving all kinds of things, and yet the story that kept coming through their dry reports was not at all the story of a haunted house, it was the story of several earnest, I believe misguided, certainly determined people, with their differing motivations and backgrounds. I found it so exciting that I wanted more than anything else to set up my own haunted house, and put my people in it, and see what I could make happen.[1]

Eleanor accepts Dr. Montague's invitation because she has been waiting for something like Hill House all of her life. She has spent the last eleven years of her life caring for her invalid mother, whom she hated, and all during that time she ". . . had held fast to the belief that someday something would happen."[2] After her father's death when she was twelve, Eleanor was isolated and forbidden to mix with anyone. In short, Jackson communicates that Eleanor has gone so long with no one to love and with nothing happening that she would now go anywhere or do anything in order to feel alive, to be loved, and to belong.

By age thirty-two, Eleanor has begun to wonder what she has done with all the wasted time and is chilled by the cold thought that she is letting time go by. This reminds her of a line from the little Shakespearean song "O Mistress

---

[1]Shirley Jackson, "Experience and Fiction," Come Along with Me, Stanley Edgar Hyman, editor (New York: The Viking Press, 1968), pp. 200-201.

[2]Shirley Jackson, The Haunting of Hill House (New York: Popular Library, 1959), p. 8.

Mine" from "Twelfth Night":[1] "In delay there lies no plenty."[2] As Shakespeare admonishes, Eleanor is not delaying any longer. Finding joy in her journey to Hill House, she ponders driving to the end of the world, which she symbolically does. Her journey is a flight[3] from her unloving past--her hated sister, her invalid mother, the isolated environment--to a world of fantasy.

During her journey to Hill House, Eleanor expresses her loneliness and lack of a home by imagining dream lives in various places she passes. This daydream is climaxed when

---

[1]As in The Road Through the Wall, The Bird's Nest, The Sundial, We Have Always Lived in the Castle, and Come Along with Me, Jackson's numerological symbolism with the number "twelve" is obvious. When she was twelve, Eleanor's father died, stones fell on their house, her uneventful and unhappy life began, and the then unknown Hill House became uninhabitable. Jackson stresses the significance of twelve in Eleanor's life through its repeated use. Both the names "Eleanor Vance" and "John Montague" contain twelve letters. Dr. Montague sends twelve invitations. He invites Eleanor because of the stones falling on her house when she was twelve. Eleanor takes Route 39 (3 + 9 = 12) to Hill House. Dr. Montague hears twelve different stories about Hill House. The Shakespearean song that Eleanor keeps saying to herself contains twelve lines and is from "Twelfth Night." The significance of having a loving father, especially through puberty which traditionally begins at age twelve, is one of Jackson's recurring themes. (In all of her novels, the number twelve is the most significant. It is interesting to theorize that twelve had some sort of psychic power over Jackson, for she completed twelve books before her death. While working on number thirteen, she died.)

[2]Jackson, The Haunting of Hill House, p. 18.

[3]Eleanor's journey of escape parallels Natalie's journey in Hangsaman, Elizabeth's in The Bird's Nest, and Gloria's in The Sundial. All four of them are mentally adolescents fleeing an oppressive, uncaring, unloving world.

at lunch she hears a little girl at a near-by table ask for her milk in a cup of stars. Eleanor thinks that she too is asking for a cup of stars; and when she finally finds her home, she will drink from a cup of stars. Later, at Hill House, when the others are talking of their own comfort and security, Eleanor announces proudly that she has a cup of stars. This is by then not only recognizable as an outright lie, but a pathetic attempt to pretend that she is neither lonely nor defenseless. "Cup of stars" becomes a shorthand phrase for all her daydreams.

She drives by an old fairgrounds where there have been motorcycle races and sees an old sign with the words DARE and EVIL. Knowing that these fragments are from the word DARE-DEVIL, she perceives the sign as an omen. Eleanor has dared to accept the invitation, to take the car, and to begin the journey which is foreshadowed as evil. Eleanor, more importantly, dares not to delay living any longer; but because of her mother's unloving influence, she does believe that to dare to be is evil. This causes her to carry a heavy burden of guilt which is the instrumental cause of her schizophrenia which later develops.

Hill House is six miles on the road which, symbolically, leads away from the church in Hillsdale. It is an evil, suggestive road, rocky, full of ruts, and dead-end, a last-chance type of road. For Eleanor, it represents, as with any road of freedom from a land of cruelty and hate, the

road to fantasy.

She drives along the road feeling like a new person and thinking, "In delay there lies no plenty,"[1] when suddenly the gates of Hill House spring at her. As she first looks at Hill House, it seems to be patiently waiting for her like a predator for its prey. Hill House is the externalization of fantasy. Jackson personifies Hill House with her first mention of it; thus, the house represents a living, plotting enemy. Eleanor's first reaction to the house is that it is vile and diseased and a voice inside her tells her to leave immediately, but there is no place else for her to go. And when she goes through the Hill House gates on the road of no return, they are locked behind her, symbolizing that there is no escape from her fantasy. Once inside the house, she feels as though she has been swallowed by a monster, but this first reaction soon changes and she grows to love Hill House and the fantasy it represents.

Eleanor's background has been such a loveless, lonely wasteland that she sees great hope in Hill House. When Luke arrives, she thinks again, "Journeys end in lovers meeting."[2] She wonders if Luke could be the lover at the end of her journey. But Jackson has attached a double meaning to "Journeys end in lovers meeting," and while Eleanor thinks of it as meeting her lover, she overlooks the interpretation of

---

[1] Jackson, The Haunting of Hill House, p. 22.

[2] Ibid., p. 41.

ending the journey of life, which the dead-end road foreshadows.

Having wondered what Hill House would be like, Eleanor cannot quite believe it once she gets there. Sitting with the others in the parlor, she tells herself that they are all going to be friends. Just to sit among them gives her a feeling of belonging, which represents the greatest victory in her life; thus, she begins to love Hill House. Hill House also appeals to Eleanor because it is extremely dark. There are many inside rooms with no windows or access to the outdoors at all; the windows are heavily shrouded with hangings and draperies within and shrubbery without. All of the doors in the house automatically swing shut, keeping light out, when they are not held open. The house seems to hold darkness within its walls. The hills are piled around Hill House, and in the late afternoon they feel the hills pushing in because the sun is blotted out. Eleanor likes Hill House dark and hidden; it is her own little fantasy land.

Hill House is hidden, however, because it is lying in wait for its prey. If it were on top of the hills, everyone would be able to see it, and it would be unable to surprise them. When Eleanor and Theodora go looking for a brook, it leaps up before them without warning. They both remark that things about Hill House like to surprise people; the hills and the house constantly watch and locate them. Dr. Montague tells them that some houses are born bad and that this house

". . . watches every move you make."[1] This subjectivism, bestowing personality upon inanimate objects, is one of Jackson's favorite devices. Hill House takes on many of the characteristics of a cat, a lion. On her way to the house, Eleanor passes a mansion with two lions in front of it, and she pretends that she owns the house and cares for the lions. Jackson mentions these same lions a dozen times. As they go to sleep the first night, the house broods, settles, and stirs. The pounding that occurs moves up and down the hall like an animal pacing. As lions become old, they become man-eaters; Hill House is eighty years old, only during the last twenty years have people been unable to live in it. Lions lie in wait in darkness and pounce upon their victims; everyone feels that Hill House is lying in wait, ready to pounce. Through this analogy, Jackson establishes that Hill House--fantasy--is a predator, waiting to devour its prey.

Eleanor and Theodora develop an unnaturally close friendship which causes Eleanor to feel even more a part of the group. After sleeping there, she wakes up realizing that she is extremely happy and contented. This is the first good night's sleep that she has had since her mother died, and it is the first time she has ever been anywhere in her life. Jackson depicts Eleanor as a pathetic creature crying out to belong to anything, even a haunted house. Having no job or

---

[1] Ibid., p. 61.

friends to which to return, Eleanor begins to think of staying at Hill House forever: "Perhaps it has us now, this house, perhaps it will not let us go."[1] This is Jackson's further foreshadowing that the world of fantasy will become Eleanor's permanent sanctuary.

After the first terrifying door-pounding episode, Eleanor, thirsting for happiness for so long, begins to drink in the intoxicating dangers of Hill House and falls under its spell of fantasy. She feels alive for the first time in her life and the joy she feels at being there wants to bubble out of her:

> Suddenly, without reason, laughter trembled inside Eleanor; she wanted to run to the head of the table and hug the doctor, she wanted to reel, chanting, across the stretches of the lawn, she wanted to sing and to shout and to fling her arms and move in great emphatic, possessing circles around the rooms of Hill House; I am here, I am here, she thought.[2]

Thus, Jackson makes it apparent that Eleanor has found her refuge, her sanctuary.

On the second morning as Eleanor recalls the pounding, she says that she had the sense that the house wanted to consume them, make them a part of it; hence attributing her own inner desires to the house--she wants to be consumed by the house, to belong to it. Jackson again foreshadows Eleanor's fate, for ultimately it is her attachment to Hill House which destroys her.

Eleanor has great feelings of guilt. During the night

---

[1] Ibid., p. 54.

[2] Ibid., p. 100.

that her mother died, she heard her mother pounding on the wall and went back to sleep, or she dreamed that she heard her mother pounding. Nevertheless, she carries this guilt for her mother's death. During the second night at Hill House, Eleanor awakes and cries out, "Coming, mother, coming."[1] She has heard the pounding on the doors and sleepily thinks that it is her mother. Even as she runs to Theodora's room, she tries to convince herself that it is a noise down by the nursery, not her mother knocking against the wall for help. Later, she tells Theodora and Luke:

> It was my fault my mother died. She knocked on the wall and called me and called me and I never woke up. I ought to have brought her the medicine; I always did before.[2] But this time she called me and I never woke up.

Eleanor's feelings of guilt account for some of the weird happenings at Hill House.[3] Luke finds "HELP ELEANOR COME

---

[1] Ibid., p. 90.

[2] Ibid., p. 150.

[3] The weird episodes involving the writing on the walls and the blood on Theodora's clothes are the result of Eleanor's feelings of guilt. The explanations for the other weird happenings at Hill House, however, are not that clear. For example, there are five possible explanations for the pounding on the doors: (1) Eleanor, remembering her mother's death, imagines the pounding and the reactions of the others, (2) As Arthur discovers, it could be a branch hitting against a window, (3) The Dudleys, who care for the house as though it belongs to them, try to drive people out of it by creating the pounding, (4) Dr. Montague creates the noise to observe their reactions to it, or (5) The pounding is a supernatural manifestation. The other weird occurence is the cold air. The doorway to the nursery contains an area of air so cold that hands thrust into it become too numb to hold a tape measure, but a thermometer dropped into that same area registers no change. For this, Jackson offers no explanation.

HOME"[1] written on the wall in chalk. This chalk message is a result of her guilt feelings which have caused her personality to begin to disintegrate. The splinter of her personality which is guilt-ridden has caused her to write the message; but when Luke finds it and tells everyone, Eleanor is shocked and interprets it to mean that Hill House has singled her out and wants her to stay. Again, she attributes her own desires to the house, which, representing her fantasy, does want her to stay. Eleanor's guilty feelings also explain the message which she writes in red over Theodora's bed, "HELP ELEANOR COME HOME ELEANOR."[2] She feels guilty about her mother's death, but she has also begun to feel guilty about taking the car, driving to Hill House, having a good time--daring to be alive; she knows that her mother would disapprove. Eleanor, like Elizabeth in The Bird's Nest, is torn between her need to live and her burden of guilt.

Eleanor's personality splits after the blood is found on Theodora's clothes. That night she hears voices from Theodora's room, which is dark even though the lights were left on, and she grips Theodora's hand. Eleanor is not holding Theodora's hand; she is holding the hand of her other self. When the pounding begins on Saturday night, Eleanor thinks that it is in her head and feels as though she is disappearing into the house, little by little. As her whole

---

[1]Jackson, The Haunting of Hill House, p. 103.

[2]Ibid., p. 110.

personality splinters more and more, she seeks out more refuge in fantasy until she has become a part of the house, doomed to be a part of it forever.

Because Eleanor's life has been so void of love, she wants to know Luke better but has no idea of how to achieve that goal. She says to him, "Journeys end in lovers meeting."[1] Wanting to be cherished by him, she is again disappointed because all he tells her is that he never had a mother and she is very lucky to have had a mother, which is pitifully ironic because her invalid mother is the real villain in her tragic life. When Luke and Theodora both reject her, Eleanor becomes more and more a part of her fantasy world; she thinks she can feel and hear everything all through the house; she hears ". . . the dust drifting gently in the attics, the wood aging."[2]

All of these causes--Theodora's rejection of her, Theodora and Luke's romance, and her own feelings of guilt--splinter her personality even further. This culminates on Sunday night when she slips out of her room while everyone is sleeping and wildly pursues a fleeting voice, which she thinks to be her mother's. Knowing that time is running out, she begins to climb the iron stairway of the library tower. As she climbs the stairway, she knows she is home, this is where she belongs. The desire to belong has become so

---

[1] Ibid., p. 118.

[2] Ibid., p. 158.

strong that Eleanor will commit suicide in order to fulfill it. The trapdoor which leads to the balcony where the village girl hanged herself, however, is locked, and Luke brings her down safely. Jackson shows Eleanor's schizophrenia during this chase by interchanging the names "Eleanor" and "Nell."

The reasons for Eleanor's inevitable suicide have been accumulating all of her life only to culminate at Hill House. Losing her father when she was twelve began the mental erosion, which was furthered by the stones falling on her house. The weathering of her mind continued as her mother isolated her from society during adolescence. The corrosive action deepened when Eleanor was twenty-one and isolated further by having to care for her invalid mother. When Eleanor comes to Hill House, her mind is scarred by numerous ruts and gorges that have eaten away at it because the roots of love and understanding were never cultivated by her mother during adolescence. Eleanor's adolescence is reflected in the Hill House nursery which is isolated because of a cold draft in its doorway, "like the doorway of a tomb."[1] And like Eleanor, the two Crain daughters who lived in that nursery grew up without any parental guidance or love.

Jackson sarcastically has Dr. Montague's Plancheteering wife sleep in the nursery. Before retiring, she tells

---

[1] Ibid., p. 85.

her husband:

> My dear, how can I make you perceive that there is no danger where there is nothing but love and sympathetic understanding? I am here to help these unfortunate beings--I am here to extend the hand of heartfelt fondness, and let them know that there are some who remember, who will listen and weep for them; their loneliness is over. . . .[1]

Mrs. Montague reiterates Jackson's message: There is no danger where there is love and understanding. Eleanor is a lost soul, an unfortunate being who desperately needs love. The sympathetic Mrs. Montague, however, extends such kindness and understanding to dead spirits only. Eleanor tragically parallels Hangsaman's schizoid Natalie Waite who realizes that only through suicide would she cause people to recognize and notice her.

Jackson carefully delineates all of Eleanor's past, her experiences at Hill House, and the deaths associated with the house in order to show that her suicide is a logical and inevitable step in the pursuit of her sanctuary. The last shattering reason that triggers her suicide is that Dr. Montague tells her that she must leave Hill House. Hysterically, she explains that this is her home where she will always belong. In the real world, she has no place to go, no apartment, no other home. As she prepares to leave, she sees that the house is waiting for her; it, representing fantasy, wants her to stay. Starting down the drive, she

---

[1] Ibid., p. 139.

thinks, "Journeys end in lovers meeting"[1] and crashes her car into a tree so that she may stay in this happy land forever.

Through Eleanor, Jackson dramatizes that humanity, with its cruelty, apathy, and lack of love, is the real haunting element in life. It is indeed a bitter, but accurate comment on man when a haunted house offers solace to a tormented soul. Jackson's theme is that people, failing to find love and compassion in this world, will seek sanctuary in worlds of fantasy.

---

[1] Ibid., p. 173.

CHAPTER VI

THE CASTLE OF LOVE

In We Have Always Lived in the Castle, Jackson conveys her essential meaning to the reader through Merricat, a young girl inwardly living in a fantasy world of black magic while outwardly retreating with her sister Constance to a world of seclusion because that isolated fantasy world offers more love and sympathy than the world of reality which is full of cruelty and hate. Merricat's main preoccupation is with keeping her world safe, secure, and isolated through the use of arsenic, fire, physical safeguards, and black magic.

Six years earlier, when Constance was twenty-two and Merricat twelve, they had been part of a rather large family living in the Blackwood home. One spring night the family sat down to a dinner cooked, as were all their meals, by Constance. As punishment, probably for being disobedient, Mary Katherine had been sent to bed without supper. Desert consisted of blackberries (Blackwood-blackberry) which the family sweetened with sugar, all except for Constance who did not eat the berries. Within a few hours, the girls' father, mother, younger brother, and aunt were dead as a result of the arsenic which had been hidden in the sugar. The only survivors were Uncle Julian Blackwood, whose helping of sugar had been so sparse that he merely emerged as a disintegrated

shell, a senile invalid in a wheelchair; Constance, who was tried for murder and acquitted; and Merricat, the real poisoner. Since then, Constance, Merricat, and Uncle Julian have lived alone in the big house, isolated from a hostile village that still believes Constance to be guilty. As Jackson opens her story, Constance is on the verge of deciding to go out into the world again. Merricat, who sees this as a rejection of herself and a threat to her private world of fantasy, is frightened, especially when Charles Blackwood, an unknown cousin, arrives to stay with them. In the few days that he is there, he humiliates Uncle Julian, upsets Merricat's order of doing things, but manages to win over Constance, apparently to the plan of marrying him and leaving. Charles is a repulsive, cruel person, interested only in the Blackwood fortune, but for Merricat it is enough that he is an intruder. In an attempt to get rid of him, she sets fire to the house. The firemen come and extinguish the fire, but then they and the other villagers join in a frenzied attack on the house, a mob scene during which most of the house is demolished and Constance is totally crushed by their hatred. Uncle Julian dies during the fire; and the girls, who have spent the night in Merricat's hiding place in the woods, return to their wreck of a house. Constance, demoralized by the fury and cruelty of the mob, will never again want to leave the house, which, of course, is Merricat's fondest dream come true. They salvage what they can from the first-floor

rooms that are left and begin a make-shift existence, somewhat abetted by anonymous offerings of food from the penitent and fear-plagued villagers. Constance and Merricat barricade the house and refuse to admit even those few who want to help them. Charles returns once, still hoping to reap a profit, but they refuse him too; this rejection thrills Merricat who laughs until the tears run down her cheeks. Jackson ends her story with the girls reassuring themselves of their happiness and still managing to cope with their new mode of existence after five months of being barricaded in their "castle."

Merricat's alienation from the world was started many years earlier by two factors--her own quarreling, unloving family and the vicious villagers. Jackson indicates that these two factors have been the key influences on Merricat--actually age eighteen, but mentally a precocious twelve[1]--all of her life. The Blackwood women always quarreled in the past and inevitably drew the men into their petty quarrels. Uncle Julian and John Blackwood, Merricat's father, frequently had bitter arguments about their wives' clashes and the amount of food that Julian and his wife Dorothy ate. At the dinner table, Merricat was never allowed to sit by her parents, but always sat between her sister Constance and her

---

[1]Jackson again establishes special significance to age twelve in a girl's life. Merricat was twelve when she put the arsenic in the sugar and her mental age has stayed at twelve.

Uncle Julian. She wishes that her parents had once said, "Mary Katherine, we love you."[1] She was not only excluded from immediate contact with her parents by the seating arrangement, but she was frequently sent to bed without any supper because she had been wicked or disobedient. When this happened, Constance, the only member of the family who showed love toward Merricat, would sneak dinner up to her. Merricat, who refused to accept her family's world of hate and pettiness, decided to relieve their unhappy existence and begin her own little secure world with Constance. This was all accomplished, in a strangely compassionate manner, with a spoonful of sugar. When Constance was arrested, she told the police that they all deserved to die. Merricat's retreat from reality into her "castle" had begun.

The village is the other key factor that starts Merricat's alienation from society. The people of the village have always hated the Blackwoods because they have money, a big home, and they erected a fence to keep the villagers out. After Constance's trial, during which Merricat was in an orphanage, the villagers came to their house to torment them and steal souveniers. They would picnic on the front lawn, take pictures of each other standing in front of the house, loose their dogs in the garden, and write their names on the house. Thus, Jackson makes it obvious that Merricat creates her own world of fantasy to escape the cruelty of reality--her

---

[1]Shirley Jackson, We Have Always Lived in the Castle (New York: Popular Library, 1962), p. 115.

family and the village, worlds of hate.

The village, symbolic of society, with its dull and deliberate hate, continues to cause Merricat to seek further alienation and become obsessed with keeping her world, the "castle," safe and secure. Merricat hates Tuesdays and Fridays because she has to go into the village for food on those days; the villagers hate her because she always has money to pay for the food. Like Margaret in "Pillar of Salt," she becomes paralyzed with self-consciousness when she is in the village. The mental and physical grime of the village is symbolized through the Rochester house, the loveliest home in town; it is surrounded by piles of rusted tin, broken autos, gas tins, mattresses, plumbing fixtures, and wash tubs. The ugliness and decay of the villagers is reflected in the slow black rot which devours all of the buildings. The Elberts, who own the store, will not let their children wait on Merricat. When she orders sugar, the women in the store snicker behind her back. Through the anonymous and dull hate of the villagers, Jackson paints a bleak picture of society. The children of the village hate because their parents teach them to hate. Merricat shows her understanding of this when she thinks to herself, while they taunt her as she is leaving town, that children could not learn hate so thoroughly if their parents did not teach it to them. Jackson is commenting that children would not be so hateful and cruel if their parents did not teach them to be that way. By

refusing to let their children wait on Merricat, the Elberts foster fear and hate. When Merricat asks Mrs. Harris to make her boys stop taunting, Mrs. Harris says dully to them, "Don't call no lady names,"[1] and she and the boys all laugh. Through this episode in the village, Jackson shows that the darkest horrors of man in the natural world dwarf the terrors of the supernatural because the Elberts and Mrs. Harris do plentifully fester in society. But the hatred of the villagers goes back even farther than that.

The series of events involving the villagers is an extension of Jackson's "The Lottery," in which the townspeople find a scapegoat for their own evils and then stone him to death. In this instance, as in "The Lottery," the people, with the exception of the Donells who hate deliberately, hate dully and from force of habit. It is not because they have any specific cause for hating, but because their attitudes were developed long before the arsenic murders. The Blackwoods had already built a wall between themselves and the town, thereby causing resentment and hatred. The town's persecution, then, of Merricat becomes their outlet for revenge and frustration. It has lost any meaning and is now a ritual that is done because they did it the day before and will continue to do it the next day. The episode in Stella's Restaurant where Jim Donell sits on a stool next to Merricat and deliberately taunts her is nauseating because it is real. Man is inhumane to his fellow man.

The total episode in town does foreshadow a more definite ritual toward the end of the story--the burning of the house. Nameless and faceless like a mob at a carnival sideshow, the villagers laugh and talk during the fire. A woman yells, "Why not let it burn?"[1] A perverted sense of honor is shown by the fire chief Jim Donell when he refuses to just let the house burn, but throws the first rock at the house when the fire is out. Then the boys, the other men, the women, and even the smaller children vent their anger by attacking the house while laughing hideously. These people hate the Blackwoods and make them their own personal scapegoat. They dance around Merricat and Constance, taunting them in expectation of the stoning or burning of the girls which only Uncle Julian's death prevents. The fire, with its fear and confusion, is the triggering device that drives Merricat and her sister Constance into total isolation. Jackson deftly shows that madness, despair, and cruelty lurk just beneath the thin surface of life.

On the day following the fire, Merricat erects new safeguards to keep them secure from the sinister society outside. She nails the shutters closed, locks the doors, nails boards over the windows, and piles barricades at the sides of the house. The top of the house is burned away so the house is now open to the sky like a castle. Eventually,

---

[1] Ibid., p. 125.

vines begin to grow over the house, isolating it even more. The title We Have Always Lived in the Castle could be interpreted as meaning "We have always defended our stronghold against the enemy." Society is obviously the enemy, and Merricat is justified in defending against it. With barricades and lookouts, their home has become their castle, where they can be safe and secure from attack.

To protect the house before the fire, Merricat had used magic safeguards--silver dollars buried by the creek, a doll buried in the field, and a book nailed to a tree. But Charles, representing society with his monetary values, intrudes through these safeguards. He is not only an intruder in their world, but he is cruel, breaks the formalized pattern, and threatens to destroy their world by taking what Merricat loves most, Constance. When Charles first approaches the house, it symbolically begins raining because he brings an end to the ". . . slow lovely days. . .,"[1] and Merricat feels chilled as she always does when she feels that her world is being threatened. His cruelty is seen immediately as he makes fun of Uncle Julian's eating dinner and even suggests that he ". . . ought to wear a baby bib."[2] When Charles returns after the fire, however, he says that Uncle Julian was a pretty good guy and he put some flowers on his grave. Charles' hypocrisy is clearly depicted in this ironical gesture.

---

[1] Ibid., p. 68.

[2] Ibid., p. 98.

Merricat lives by formal, traditionalized patterns, her kind of patterns, and Charles upsets these. They no longer straighten the house on Mondays, they can't clean their father's room because Charles is there, and Charles goes to the village in place of Merricat. The upsetting of this sameness or routine, which has always been part of the Blackwood tradition, signifies to Merricat that her world is threatened. This facet of Merricat's personality may be a further manifestation of what is apparently common in literature about American adolescents--the desire to forestall the end of innocence,[1] the desire to keep things the way they are, the way they always have been. Jackson's keeping Merricat at age twelve mentally is additional evidence of this.

Merricat's main fear of Charles is that he will destroy their world just as he has defiled their stronghold. She washes or breaks everything he touches in an attempt to purify all he has desecrated. When he tells Constance that she has been wrong to let Merricat and Uncle Julian hide with her, that they should live normal lives, he represents a definite threat to Merricat's world. Merricat, like Eleanor in Hill House, would have no place to go if anything happens to her world; therefore, like Eleanor, she must protect and preserve it. When Constance begins to say "we," referring to herself and Charles, Merricat knows that time is running short, she must do something to protect her world. Thus,

---

[1]Two examples are Holden Caulfield and Huck Finn.

she sets fire to the house and cleanses her world of Charles.

After the fire and Merricat and Constance have been driven into total isolation by the villager's cruelty, Jackson makes her blackest statements on society through the use of irony. While knocking on their door on the day following the fire, Helen Clarke says to her husband, "But I'm sure they misunderstood the people last night; I'm sure Constance was upset, and I must tell them that nobody meant any harm."[1] It does seem as though it would be hard to misunderstand a mob, laughing and cheering as a house burns, who, when the fire is out, deliberately destroys all that is left in the house. "The sink where Constance washed her dishes was filled with broken glass, as though glass after glass had been broken there methodically, one after another."[2] Jackson makes it obvious, except, perhaps, to Helen Clarke, exactly what the mob intended, and rather than nobody meaning any harm, they all meant a great deal of deliberate harm. Later, Helen Clarke says, "But Constance takes things so seriously,"[3] as though the mob's actions were not something to take seriously.

Jim Clarke and Dr. Levy, who was always in a hurry when he called on Uncle Julian because he was afraid of the girls, come to the house the first night after the fire and say, "You can't just let people go on worrying and worrying about you."[4] Society ironically blames Merricat and Constance

---

[1] Jackson, op. cit., p. 146. [2] Ibid., p. 137.

[3] Ibid., p. 146. [4] Ibid., p. 152.

for causing people to worry about them now, for society never worried about them when it might have done some good, and even now society is far more curious than conscientious. Clarke and Levy continue by saying that the girls would feel different toward their "friends" if they could see all of the flowers that were sent to Uncle Julian's funeral. The idea that Jackson sarcastically expresses is that society can atone, or at least thinks it can, for any sin by sending flowers to a man's funeral. The two men continue to yell at the house, "You're not gaining anything by driving away your friends. . ., there's a limit to how much friends can take."[1] The irony is that none of the villagers were ever their friends. Then, after what the mob did at the fire, to say that they cannot take much more from the girls is unfortunately human. When the two men begin to leave, Dr. Levy says, ". . . one of these days you're going to need help. You'll be sick, or hurt."[2] Ironically, they needed the help the night before, but their "friends" failed to heed the call.

Jackson's townspeople are cruel, selfish, and malicious; they are capable of no feeling except greed. Those characters who seek refuge, safety, or sanity in Jackson's world of reality are always disappointed because her world offers only the malignant poison of cruelty and hate. Love and compassion must be found in isolated worlds of fantasy, the castles of imagination.

---

[1] Ibid., p. 153. [2] Ibid.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The specific purpose of this study was to determine why Shirley Jackson's characters searched for refuge in worlds of fantasy. In all five of her main novels, Hangsaman, The Bird's Nest, The Sundial, The Haunting of Hill House, and We Have Always Lived in the Castle, Jackson's point is that when love and happiness are lacking in the real world, people are forced to seek these goals in worlds of fantasy.

In Hangsaman, Jackson shows that when an adolescent is psychologically forced to live in an undesirable, meaningless world, she will create imaginary worlds in order to escape. Seventeen-year-old Natalie Waite flees the pressure, boredom, and cruelty of reality by creating three exciting worlds of fantasy in which her true self is revealed. On the surface she masquerades in order to please her unconcerned father, but this dual role splits Natalie's personality and schizophrenia develops. Natalie smothers her own real self and personal desires until these submerged desires break free and create their own fantasy world. Jackson, strongly believing that this dissociation from reality is caused by a lack of parental guidance and love, stresses repeatedly in her fiction the importance of having a loving

father through adolescence. Natalie's multiple personality creates a fantasy with so much interest and relevance that she wants it to become her reality, but eventually her perverted fantasy forces her to seek another refuge. Rejecting both reality and fantasy, she inevitably will choose suicide. Hangsaman is a horrendous picture of an adolescent mentally dying in an unloving, apathetic world.

The Road Through the Wall, however, Jackson's first novel, is her most biting comment on apathetic parents who have demented values. The parents, obsessed with monetary values, are class-conscious, prejudice toward minority groups, and apathetic toward their own children. They never have time to give their children love and guidance. This atmosphere of moral bankruptcy produces a tragic conclusion. While the parents are all attending a garden party and commenting on how good their children are because they have been so well brought up, one of the "good" boys, thirteen-year-old, confused and neglected Tod Donald, kills three-year-old Caroline Desmond by smashing in her head with a rock.

Jackson's main point in The Bird's Nest, as in Hangsaman and The Road Through the Wall, is that parents are responsible for the attitudes, aspirations, and actions of their children. Through Elizabeth Richmond, Jackson tragically depicts the four-way disintegration of a personality because of the lack of parental love and guidance. Like Natalie Waite in Hangsaman, Elizabeth, who denies existence to part of her personality, develops schizophrenia because

she received no love, security, or understanding while she was maturing. Her smothered personalities, fleeing from the totally unpleasant world of reality, escape into their own individual worlds of fantasy. Jackson's point is that when the moral and social order is polluted, it is impossible for the human personality to survive. Elizabeth's four separate personalities are eventually fused through love and understanding. The lack of love drives Elizabeth into fantasy; the presence of love enables her to return to reality.

The Sundial represents Jackson's most pessimistic view of life. This novel focuses on a world devoid of love, the Halloran world which is a microcosm of society. The heroine, Aunt Fanny Halloran, has always been isolated by her unloving parents within the walls of the Halloran estate. Thus, Aunt Fanny, like Natalie Waite and Elizabeth Richmond, grows up without compassion and love. In order to fill the void which the absence of love causes in her life, Aunt Fanny imagines revelations from her dead father, who tells her that the world is coming to an end and only those in the Halloran house will be saved. Love is illusive to Aunt Fanny. She believes that by ending this world and beginning a new one love will be hers to cherish. But Jackson's point is that time passes and the world changes; however, if a person has grown up without love and guidance, true happiness will always be an illusion. Aunt Fanny's quest for this illusion

takes her into fantasy.

Through Eleanor Vance in The Haunting of Hill House, Jackson dramatizes that people, failing to find love and compassion in this world, will search for these goals in fantasy. Because her real world has always been a vacuum of love and understanding, Eleanor plunges into the fantasy of Hill House. Like Elizabeth in The Bird's Nest, Eleanor is torn between her need to live and her feelings of guilt. This psychological dilemma splinters her personality. Unable to stand reality and forced to leave fantasy, Eleanor, paralleling Hangsaman's Natalie Waite, ultimately chooses suicide. Having grown up without a father and with her unloving mother, she flees to Hill House because it offers her sanctuary from the cruel, apathetic, unloving world of reality.

The isolated world of fantasy offers more love and sympathy than the world of reality in We Have Always Lived in the Castle. Merricat is driven into fantasy by two factors--her unloving family and the cruel villagers. Isolated in their castle-like house, Merricat and her sister Constance find peace and security. Natalie Waite in Hangsaman, Elizabeth Richmond in The Bird's Nest, Aunt Fanny Halloran in The Sundial, Eleanor Vance in The Haunting of Hill House, and Mary Katherine Blackwood in We Have Always Lived in the Castle are all driven to worlds of fantasy in search of true happiness because the real world offers only

cruelty and hate.

The majority of Jackson's worlds of fiction are unpleasant because she was trying to paint a sensitive and accurate picture of life in the twentieth century. Man's inhumanity to man--the apathy of parents, the cruelty of society, the perversion of humane values--screams that her view of the world in the twentieth century was distressingly realistic.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. PRIMARY SOURCES

I. BOOKS

Jackson, Shirley. . . . And Baby Makes Three. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1960.

_____. The Bird's Nest, The Magic of Shirley Jackson. Stanley Edgar Hyman, editor. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966.

_____. Come Along with Me. Stanley Edgar Hyman, editor. New York: The Viking Press, 1968.

_____. Famous Sally. New York: Harlin Quist, Inc., 1966.

_____. Hangsaman. New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, Inc., 1951.

_____. The Haunting of Hill House. New York: Popular Library, 1959.

_____. The Lottery. New York: Avon Books, 1949.

_____. Nine Magic Wishes. In Crowell-Collier's Modern Master Series. New York: Crowell-Collier, 1963.

_____. The Road Through the Wall. New York: Farrar, Straus and Company, 1948.

_____. The Sundial. New York: Ace Books, Inc., 1958.

_____. We Have Always Lived in the Castle. New York: Popular Library, 1962.

_____. The Witchcraft of Salem Village. In United States Landmark Series. New York: Random House, 1956.

II. PERIODICALS

Jackson, Shirley. "After You, My Dear Alphonse," The New Yorker, XVIII (January 16, 1943), 51-53.

_____. "The Bus," The Saturday Evening Post, CCXXXVIII (March 27, 1965), 62-63.

_____. "Colloquy," The New Yorker, XX (August 5, 1944), 45.

_____. "Come Along with Me," McCall's, XCVI (February, 1969), 72-73.

_____. "Come Dance with Me in Ireland," The New Yorker, XIX (May 15, 1943), 44.

_____. "Exploits of Charles," Reader's Digest, LVI (March, 1950), 20-22.

_____. "Fame," The Writer, LXI (August, 1948), 265-266.

_____. "Fine Old Firm," The New Yorker, XX (March 4, 1944), 64.

_____. "The Lost Kingdom of Oz," The Reporter, XXI (December 10, 1959), 42-43.

_____. "The Lottery," The New Yorker, XXIV (June 26, 1948), 25-28.

_____. "Louisa, Please Come Home," Ladies' Home Journal, LXXVII (May, 1960), 48-49.

_____. "Men with Their Big Shoes," The Yale Review, XXXVI (March, 1947), 447-455.

_____. "My Life with R. H. Macy," The New Republic, CV (December 22, 1941), 862.

_____. "Night We All Had Grippe," Harper's Magazine, CCIV (January, 1952), 74-78.

_____. "No, I Don't Want to Go to Europe," The Saturday Evening Post, CCXXXVII (June 6, 1964), 8-10.

_____. "Phantom Lover," Woman's Home Companion, LXXVI (February, 1949), 24-25.

_____. "The Possibility of Evil," The Saturday Evening Post, CCXXXVIII (December 18, 1965), 61-69.

_____. "Renegade," Harper's Magazine, CXCVII (November, 1948), 37-43.

_____. "Trial by Combat," The New Yorker, XX (December 16, 1944), 72.

B. SECONDARY SOURCES

I. BOOKS

Calvin, Allen D. and F. J. McGuigan. Current Studies in Psychology. In The Century Psychology Series, ed. Richard M. Elliott. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1958.

Engle, T. L. Psychology: Its Principles and Applications, Fourth Edition. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1964.

Lyons, John O. The College Novel in America. Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962.

Morgan, Clifford T. Introduction to Psychology. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1956.

O'Connor, Flannery. "The Fiction Writer and His Country," The Living Novel, Granville Hicks, editor. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957. Pp. 157-164.

Shakespeare, William. "Twelfth Night," The Complete Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare, Charles Jarvis Hill and William Allan Neilson, editors. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1942. Pp. 281-310.

Stafford-Clark, David. What Freud Really Said. In What They Really Said Series, ed. A. N. Gilkes. New York: Schocken Books, 1965.

Twain, Mark. "The Mysterious Stranger," The Portable Mark Twain. Bernard DeVoto, editor. New York: The Viking Press, 1946. Pp. 631-744.

Witham, W. Tasker. The Adolescent in the American Novel, 1920-1960. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1964.

II. PERIODICALS

"Come On, Everyone," Time, LIII (May 23, 1949), 106-107.

Edge, Peggy. "WLB Biography: Shirley Jackson," Wilson Library Bulletin, XXXVIII (December, 1963), 352.

Geismar, Maxwell. "Annals of Magic," Saturday Review, XLII (October 31, 1959), 19.

Hicks, Granville. "The Nightmare in Reality," Saturday Review, XLIX (September 17, 1966), 31-32.

Hyman, Stanley Edgar. "Shirley Jackson," The Saturday Evening Post, CCXXXVIII (December 18, 1965), 63.

"Mon Did It," Time, LXXIV (October 19, 1959), 110.

Peden, William. "Bedeviled Lady," Saturday Review, XXXVII (July 17, 1954), 11.

_____. "The Chosen Few," Saturday Review, XLI (March 8, 1958), 18.

"Psychological Thriller," Time, LVII (April 23, 1951), 114.

Role, Charles J. "Reader's Choice," The Atlantic, CXCIV (August, 1954), 86.

"School of One," Newsweek, LXVI (August 23, 1965), 83.

Scott, W. T. "Dreaming Girl," Saturday Review, XXXIV (May 5, 1951), 11.

"Strange Case of Miss R," Time, LXIII (June 21, 1954), 108.

Swados, Harvey. "What Is This World?," The News Republic, CXXXVIII (March 3, 1958), 19.